



*Effective Substance Abuse and  
Mental Health Programs  
for Every Community*

## Project SUCCESS

Project SUCCESS (Schools Using Coordinated Community Efforts to Strengthen Students) prevents and reduces substance use among high-risk, multiproblem high school adolescents. Developed and tested with alternative school youth 14 to 18 years old, the program places highly trained professionals in schools to provide a full range of substance use prevention and early intervention services. Counselors use a variety of intervention strategies, including:

- Information dissemination
- Normative and preventive education
- Counseling and skills training
- Problem identification and referral
- Community-based processes
- Environmental approaches

In addition, Project SUCCESS links the school to the community's continuum of care when necessary, referring both students and families to human services organizations, including substance abuse treatment agencies.

## INTENDED POPULATION

Project SUCCESS was tested with 14- to 18-year-old adolescents who attended an alternative school that separated them from the general school population. Participants typically came from low- to middle-income families, and 30 percent had parents who abused substances. The program is effective with African American, Asian American, White, and Hispanic/Latino youth of both genders. These adolescents have been placed in an alternative school setting for a variety of reasons, including:

## Proven Results\*

- 23% reported ending substance use
- 37% decrease in overall substance use
- Decreased problem behavior
- Decreased associations with peers who use substances
- 45% reported ending marijuana use
- 23% reported ending tobacco use
- 33% reported ending alcohol use

*\*Relative to adolescents in comparison group who did not participate in Project SUCCESS. For those who did not quit drug use, there was a significant reduction in mean alcohol and drug use.*

## INTERVENTION

Universal

Selective

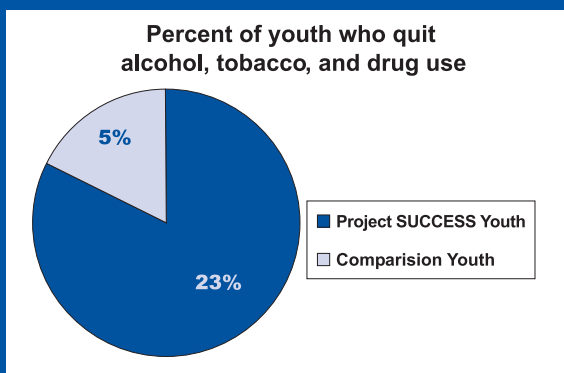
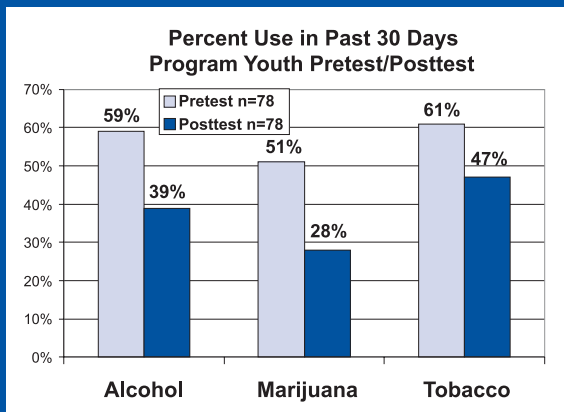
Indicated



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

## OUTCOMES

Adolescents participating in Project SUCCESS showed a significant 37% overall decrease in substance use as compared to adolescents in the comparison group who did not participate in Project SUCCESS. Of the adolescents using substances, 23% of those in the Project SUCCESS program quit using, whereas only 5% in the comparison condition quit. For those adolescents who did not quit using substances, there was still a significant reduction in mean substance use ranging between 17% and 26.6% among Project SUCCESS participants.



Posttest data regarding use during the previous 30 days revealed that of students in the second year of Project SUCCESS ( $n=78$ ) who reported using at pretest:

- 33% (15 of 46) reported no longer using alcohol
- 45% (18 of 40) reported no longer using marijuana
- 23% (11 of 48) reported no longer using tobacco

Project SUCCESS was found to be effective with both genders, students from various ethnic groups, and across grade levels from the 9th to 12th grades. Project SUCCESS benefited not only students who participated directly in the program but also those students (the control group) who participated indirectly by associating with Project SUCCESS students.

- Poor academic performance
- Emotional problems
- School discipline problems
- Truancy
- Negative attitude toward school
- Criminal activity

## BENEFITS

Project SUCCESS helps adolescents with emotional, learning, and behavioral problems expressed in behaviors such as fighting, cutting class, and talking back to teachers. The program teaches resistance and social competency skills for:

- Communication
- Decisionmaking
- Stress and anger management
- Problem solving
- Resisting peer pressure

## HOW IT WORKS

A partnership is established between a prevention agency and alternative school. An individual with a graduate degree in social work, counseling, or psychology, who is experienced in providing substance abuse prevention counseling to adolescents, is recruited to work in the alternative school as a Project SUCCESS Counselor (PSC). This individual will provide the school with a full range of substance abuse prevention and early intervention services to help decrease risk factors and enhance protective factors related to substance abuse. Program components include:

- **Prevention Education Series**—An eight-session substance abuse prevention education program conducted by the PSC.
- **Individual Assessment**—Following the Prevention Education Series, students are seen individually by the PSC to determine their level of substance use, family substance abuse, and the need for additional services.
- **Individual and Group Counseling**—Following assessment, a series of 8 to 12 time-limited individual or group sessions are conducted in the school. Students attend one of seven different groups based on their developmental differences, substance use, and family history of substance abuse. Individual sessions are scheduled as needed.
- **Parent Programs**—Parents attend an evening dinner meeting with a speaker who discusses what they can do to prevent and reduce substance use.

- **Referral**—Counselors refer students and parents who require treatment, more intensive counseling, or other services to appropriate agencies or practitioners in the community.

## IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

Project SUCCESS requires formation of a partnership between a substance abuse prevention organization that will administer the program and an alternative school where it will operate. Specific staff participants include:

- **School Principal** who establishes the initial implementation agreement, selects the counselor, oversees the program, and supervises the counselor onsite
- **Executive Director/Project Director** who initiates and manages the program, develops procedures, and hires staff
- **Project SUCCESS Counselor (PSC)** who implements the program at the school, consults with the principal and teachers, engages in informal outreach activities with students and their parents, and provides all prevention and early intervention services to students
- **Project Supervisor** who supervises the PSC and helps coordinate activities with school staff

Program staff and administrators need to address the following steps:

- 1) Define program goals and objectives
- 2) Define target population
- 3) Provide training and consultation for school staff
- 4) Establish a school staff substance abuse task force
- 5) Obtain technical assistance and training

A 75-page implementation manual is available for \$150. The manual includes resource material for professionals and worksheets for students. Onsite and offsite training of varying lengths up to 5 days also is available.

## PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Project SUCCESS began in September 1995 in three alternative secondary schools in Westchester County, NY, funded with a 3-year Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention High-Risk Youth Grant. The program is based on the effective Residential Student Assistance Program (RSAP) model, which had been used in residential facilities for troubled adolescents beginning in 1987 and which, in turn, was adapted from the Westchester Student Assistance Program. This latter program used interventions based on those developed for employee assistance programs.

Project SUCCESS was designed to determine if the RSAP model could be adapted with adolescents at very high risk for substance abuse who were attending public alternative schools and living at home.

### EVALUATION DESIGN

A pretest and posttest comparison group design was used with a total sample of 425 adolescents. Participants in two of the schools were randomly assigned to Project SUCCESS or to a non-program control condition. In the third school, classrooms were randomly assigned to participate in Project SUCCESS or a non-program control condition. Students assigned to the non-program condition in these three schools were used as a school control group. Additionally, two schools that did not have a Project SUCCESS program were used as a second comparison condition. (In the *Outcomes* section, the in-school control group is referred to as the “control condition” and the two schools that did not receive Project SUCCESS are referred to as the “comparison group.”)

### PROGRAM DEVELOPER

**Student Assistance Services (SAS) Corporation** of Tarrytown, NY, developed Project SUCCESS. SAS is a private, nonprofit, community-based substance abuse prevention organization. SAS was formed in 1985 when its core program, the Student Assistance Program, spun off from the Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health, which had operated it since 1979.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### RECOGNITION

Model Program—Substance Abuse and Mental  
Health Services Administration, U.S.  
Department of Health and Human Services